

**SEIU HEALTHCARE 1199NW
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

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CURT WILLIAMS OF SEIU HEALTHCARE 1199NW

INTERVIEWEE: CURT WILLIAMS

INTERVIEWERS: SAI AHMED

SUBJECTS: ACORN; house visits; Civil Rights movement; Watergate; SEIU Healthcare 1199NW union; organizing; apartheid; PATCO strike; racism; St. Elizabeth Hospital; AFSCME [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees]; Steelworkers; organizing institutes; North Star Steel; WSNA [Washington State Nurses Association]; behavioral health; Eastside Mental Health; Behavioral Health Resources; Service and Business Office Clerical; West Seattle Psychiatric Hospital; Good Samaritan Hospital; Stevens Hospital; Deaconess Hospital; Providence; Local 49; Janus v AFSCME Supreme Court decision; Martin Luther King; Robert Kennedy; Ronald Reagan; William Donald Schaefer; Billy Murphy; Harry Lester; Lynn Williams; Glenn Goldstein; Bill Lord; Meg Niemi; Mike Sukal; Barbara Rosenthal.

LOCATION: SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

DATE: August 02, 2018

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 00:47:07

FILE NAME: WilliamsCurt_SEIU1199NW_2018_Video.mp4

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[00:00:00] **SAI AHMED:** Thank you so much, Curt, for joining us for this interview. I was hoping to ask you a couple of questions to learn more about your background in organizing and in the labor movement. I've heard you've been in it for decades, so we're really interested to see what sort of responses you have.

First of all, could you state your name today?

[00:00:44] **CURT WILLIAMS:** Curt Williams.

[00:00:48] **SAI:** Tell me a little bit about your background, your family, where you grew up and how that got you started on this organizing path.

[00:00:57] **CURT:** I grew up in Baltimore, Maryland. My father was a doctor. I was very politicized. Went to Oberlin College. Got politicized there. I did a variety of winter terms when I was in Washington, D.C.—Americans for Democratic Action and some other internships that politicized me.

When I got out of college, I went to work for ACORN, which is a community organizing group in Brooklyn, New York. Then I moved back home to Baltimore and got a job with 1199, the union.

My family was a political family, so we did talk a lot about politics.

[00:01:49] **SAI:** What was that like, growing up with a political family. How did that characterize your education?

[00:01:58] **CURT:** I actually was in a fairly wealthy family. I went to private schools, but at the same time, I'm old enough that I remember when [Martin Luther] King was shot and when Robert Kennedy was shot and the Civil Rights movement riots.

I was in a fairly privileged private school and I was alienated from that and really happy to be able to go to a college where it felt a lot more real, and where we were having real conversations.

[Ronald] Reagan got elected my sophomore year, I think, and that was a horrible moment. That's what woke me up also. The Watergate trials was the other thing. The hearings were something that also had woken me up to our institutions being a little shaky.

[00:02:57] **SAI:** Can you tell me a bit about your experience in college? You said it was more real. Did it open you up to organizing more? What did that look like, both in college and once you started working for ACORN?

[00:03:17] **CURT:** In college, I think, the events that I remember the most were people being arrested at the South African embassy in the fight around apartheid, and trying to get the college to divest. There was also the PATCO strike. PATCO had a location right near Oberlin so we went out to the picket line.

It just felt like the world was going in the wrong direction with Reagan, and I wanted to do something meaningful. After college, most people were figuring out where they were going to go, and I chose New York.

I had friends who were familiar with ACORN and I went and interviewed with them. They had a great organizer who was leading their program. He taught me how to house visit and build leadership and commitment and agitate.

You had to be pretty political because you made no money. I would buy bus tokens or subway tokens and save my money for meals and rent. I sort of ran out of money, and that's part of the reason I left New York was it's a pretty expensive place to live.

[00:04:50] **SAI:** What was your role in ACORN, and what was your experience throughout? How did your roles shift?

[00:04:56] **CURT:** My role was just to be a door knocker and an organizer, and to build community groups. I got to know people in Bed-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, New York, and East New York. Our best group, in some ways, was in East New York. My job was mostly to knock on doors and to take the leadership as the lead

organizer, put together small meetings of willing community members, and then take part in actions, or help the members take actions.

We were pretty new in New York, so we were more trying to find the right campaign, and hadn't quite found the right one yet.

[00:05:47] **SAI:** Was there a transformative moment, either before or during the time you were organizing, that really sticks out in your mind as being the moment where you wanted to dedicate your life to organizing?

[00:06:02] **CURT:** I wouldn't say there was, actually, in Brooklyn. It made me stay in the movement, to some extent, but it was really hard, and we didn't get lots of success. They just didn't have a process where they could pay the organizers enough, so I just couldn't live there. You can't live in New York on \$100 a week and sustain it for long.

[00:06:32] **SAI:** What was the transition out of ACORN like, and what did you do next?

[00:06:38] **CURT:** I moved home to Baltimore because I was out of money, and I went to work for the first African American candidate to run for mayor in Baltimore. Baltimore is really a Southern city in a lot of ways and they'd had the same very popular mayor, [William Donald] Schaefer, for a long time.

Racism in Baltimore is really pretty extreme. It's a very divided city. So, I jumped at this opportunity, and did a lot of research. Got to know Billy Murphy a little bit. He lost—lost pretty badly—but after the election, I applied to 1199, which was a well-known union in New York City, and I heard about them when I worked for ACORN. They saw that I'd worked for Billy Murphy and they were a union that was born out of the Civil Rights movement, and, amazingly, hired me.

It was a good transition to 1199 in Baltimore. They wanted to start a new organizing department, so I was the first new organizer they hired.

[00:07:53] **SAI:** How was your experience with SEIU or 1199 compared to your experience in ACORN? How were the strategies different?

[00:08:04] **CURT:** It was much more about a workplace rather than a neighborhood. It was some of the same skills. You needed to identify leadership, you needed to ask agitational questions, you needed to be a good listener. There were very useful skills I learned at ACORN that were helpful with the organizing.

The hard part was to get workers to talk to you as they're driving out of the nursing home. Our strategies were a little weak in those days, so we'd stand out front and try to talk to people and meet with people, and then meet with them at the Denny's later. So, it took a little while to get some campaigns going, but once we got them going, it was pretty lively.

[00:08:51] **SAI:** What are some of the campaigns you've worked on that stand out the most and why?

[00:08:58] **CURT:** We organized a nursing home outside of Annapolis. That was my very first campaign and I had no idea how difficult management fight back could be in the workplace. I thought that we had the election won, for sure, but people stopped talking to me. I kept fooling myself, thinking they were for the union because of earlier experience with them. So, I lost my very first campaign.

Then we ran it again because management committed to [unintelligible] and won the campaign, but never negotiated a first contract, which was sad. Then we had some other campaigns in Baltimore, and in Washington, D.C., we had a couple of big campaigns.

The biggest success I really had was organizing the social workers who worked for the City of Washington. They had a big mental health hospital, St. Elizabeth's, so they had about 500 social workers. It was a big group. We organized them and bargained their first contract. That felt really good.

It was also a moment where the union was going through all kinds of political upheaval because there was a merger with SEIU. At 1199, they'd been independent, and when we merged with SEIU, our local was one where there was a contentious fight about whether to go to SEIU or to go to AFSCME [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees]. My time there ended with that fight.

We won, going to SEIU, but I remember I worked two months straight. [Unintelligible] exhausted by the end of it. Shortly thereafter, I was recruited by the organizing institutes to help out with trainings.

I heard about the Steelworkers wanting to hire some organizers, and after eight years in Baltimore, I really wanted to try to go reinvent the labor movement again with the Steelworkers and see if we could get something going with another group of organizers who were excited about that vision as well.

[00:11:19] **SAI:** What was your experience with the Steelworkers like, and what was your role?

[00:11:23] **CURT:** I was hired to be the organizing coordinator for a district that covered Michigan and northern Ohio, a very industrial past. You could tell they'd had a heyday and were on the downward slope on the other side of it.

We started organizing a mini-mill. We were trying to organize a mini-mill in Monroe, Michigan, which was a target right in their sweet spot. I got a lot of interns to come up to the organizing institutes. These were young students who wanted to be organizers.

We had about 10 of them and we went and house visited all these folks from North Star Steel. We got to a bare majority, about 51, 52 percent. I didn't think it was ready to go to an election but the district director, who was a very charismatic guy but not a terribly progressive guy, just wanted to run it anyway. Didn't want to hear anything I had to say about management's campaign or any of that, and thought he could convince people because of his charisma. He never really came down and did much with it, and we lost the campaign pretty bad.

That was a tough one. Then about six months later, we had a big campaign in the western part of the state at a meat packing plant. We had a wonderful Latino organizer. It was a Latino workforce and then an Asian workforce. They were all recent immigrants. Incredibly hard work. Exploitive work. People really got injured at this place.

We got a good majority, and the district director that I told you about earlier, Harry Lester, sent out some organizers that he hand-picked. They showed up in Lincoln Town Cars, and they didn't really want to organize, and they didn't want to work the hours, so there was some contentious back and forth with them after a couple of days.

Harry called me back to Detroit and said he needed to have a one-on-one meeting with me. The long and the short of that meeting was that he told me that these were marginal people and we don't want to organize them—it was an incredibly upsetting meeting—and he said he was going to pull the resources.

I said, "We're not leaving. We're going to run this campaign." We had an election in two weeks. I got the international union in Pittsburgh to send me some people. It was terrible. We lost the election by 40 votes. We could have won it if Harry hadn't done this.

That was a very politicizing event for me. I could never work for him again and I left. I didn't leave the Steelworkers, so they gave me a choice to move to Houston or move to Seattle. I moved to Seattle and we organized an aluminum smelter down in Vancouver, Washington, with organizing institute interns.

This was the biggest organizing drive the Steelworkers had won in 20 years—570 workers or something like that—at [Benalco?]. I went to the convention about a month and a half after that in Pittsburgh. They tried to run an initiative on the convention floor that would ban organizers who came from college; that you would have to be hired off the shop floor in order to be hired into an organizing job for Steelworkers.

After winning this big campaign—the biggest one they'd won in a long time—it was where this reaction to people like myself and this new wave of organizers—there was just a real bummer. While Lynn Williams, who was the president at the time, was great, and he fought it off, and was very eloquent in resisting it, it didn't bode well for the future.

We tried to organize US Air and some other things, and I was on the road all the time. I'd be on the road for 10 days and home for two or three. I was in a new marriage and it wasn't working out so well. We had a big campaign in Utah, I remember, and that was very tough. The Mormon Church got involved and people all of a sudden stopped talking to me. We lost that campaign.

We had a [bike? fike?] group in Kent that we won. It was a little here, a little there. Then we had these big campaigns with airlines that didn't go so well. My wife got pregnant and I didn't want to be on the road any more. I was coming home. And 1199 here, I was familiar with because I'd worked for 1199 in Baltimore. I came to work in 1995 for 1199 here in Seattle.

[00:16:43] **SAI:** You mentioned something about the Steelworkers campaign about how organizing jobs were coming from people who were in the shop, or how they were campaigning for that? How has your perspective been influenced by the fact that you had been an organizer pretty much since college? How has that perspective influenced your work?

[00:17:08] **CURT:** It's a really good question. I think there is an authenticity for people who've come out of the shop. For a steelworker to talk about their own experience, and that's why they're organizing, really makes it more real. I would say the same thing in healthcare. People who come out of the hospital and organize and are really committed to organizing are generally the best organizers.

In some ways, I think of my job as trying to recruit people from inside the facilities to come out and organize. The problem a little bit with the steelworkers is that they thought of the job as their upward mobility more than they thought of it as a political job, where I could really change the world and impact the politics of it.

The shop floor is not a pleasant place to be all the time, so if you want to improve your life, one of those ways is to get one of the jobs for the Steelworkers Union. They have a great pension, and it's one of the jobs where you take a shower after work, and when you go to work for the union, you take the shower before work. [laughing] it's different.

So, they were coveted jobs, and they created a political problem for the union. I remember, they had a pecking order in the steel mill. You had the basic mill plants, which were huge. That was where the highest level of bargaining happening happened. They were shutting down a fair amount of them.

The lowest level was the foundry, where they would melt steel from old cars and other places, or just make parts. Those guys were the hardest workers, the lowest paid, and always the best organizers. If I could find guys out of the foundry, they were the best to work with. I remember having a little crew of folks from the foundry,

but I couldn't get the basic steel guys to really—it was hard work, and it was different than what they thought, and they had a little problem with that.

[00:19:25] **SAI:** After the steelworkers, working with them, you moved to SEIU 1199 in Seattle?

[00:19:33] **CURT:** Yeah.

[00:19:34] **SAI:** Could you speak a little about your experience then working with the SEIU 1199?

[00:19:40] **CURT:** I knew the organizing culture at SEIU 1199, and I knew the leadership here. I knew Diane [Sosne?] and Glen [last name?] from my time in Baltimore, so it was not a difficult transition. We were in the middle of a fight with Group Health at the time, so I right away got to work.

The period in my life where I was having kids, it felt very meaningful. I got to do important organizing, but I wasn't leading a ton of organizing, and I needed to have some flexibility to just help out with kids once the kids were born.

I got back into it—I got back into new organizing again—and we opened up a whole new sector. All of our hospital organizing up till 1995 had been nurses leaving the WSNA because they thought of it as a craft union. The professional side of the WSNA dominated it, so supervisors and nurse managers were the leaders of the WSNA. The bedside nurses really wanted to have more voice, and that's what we represented, and 5,000 nurses left the WSNA to do that.

We started organizing behavioral health, which is a different kind of healthcare. These are folks who take care of folks with mental illness, generally poor folks with Medicaid. We organized Eastside Mental Health and Behavioral Health Resources in Olympia and a variety of behavioral health chapters, with the vision of trying to organize the whole state.

I think we organized three to five of them, and then Glenn Goldstein, who was the founding organizer, left in 1997 and I became the organizing director. Right after that, we had this huge campaign in Yakima. We represent the nurses in Yakima at the Memorial Hospital, and Providence owned the other, smaller hospital.

We got a call saying that they wanted to organize a union there. I sent somebody out to go see if we could get a list and that kind of thing. He did a good job and found leaders. He started in April, and by June, we were ready to call committee meetings. We got all our cards signed, and the boss didn't seem to know, and we filed to have an election with 70 percent to the Service and Business Office Clerical, a unit of about 520 people.

Management went absolutely ballistic. I'd never seen an anti-union campaign like this. They hired two union busters from Buffalo, New York, who would have daily meetings with supervisors and managers. The managers and supervisors were really incentivized to have one-on-one meetings with workers and just scare them to death. People would stop talking to us after work. It wasn't like they came and screamed at us, but they just didn't want to talk, didn't want to communicate, and our 70 percent was quickly slipping.

This boss used to be in 1199 in New York and brought a lot of film and stuff from the 1199 local in New York. The East Coast union of service workers was African American workers, so he tried to make the union out to seem like an African American union to white workers in Yakima. It was a racist way to polarize against the union. People wouldn't say that out loud, but I think that was going on in the background.

People just got scared. We were going to lose this campaign. About two weeks before the end of the campaign, one of the main leaders, Bill Lord, got fired. Bill was just a really well-loved guy, and he wanted the union because he loved Providence so much, he wanted to make it better.

It had become such a bottom line kind of place where the money was more important than the care. That's why he got involved, and then they fired him. I remember this meeting we had. We had an old train car that was the office, and on one side were the Teamsters who were organizing the warehouse workers, and on the other side was my team.

We had this emergency meeting for Bill Lord. It was packed. It was hotter than it could be. We all agreed to do a sticker "Bring Bill Back," BBB. Then we needed to figure out some way to win this thing. I urged them to think about, how can we be the union? Not just put out a piece of paper saying we want to vote for the union, but how can we act like the union?

Out of nowhere, somebody in the back said, "How about we do a bake sale?" I was like, really? A bake sale? How is that going to help us be the union?

There was a woman in central supply who had cancer and wanted to get treatment, and needed to get treatment, at the UW. We had already had a fight getting petitions signed, and people willing to donate their vacation time so she could do it, and management wouldn't let them do it. She said, "If we can raise \$1,000, we can send her to get her chemo, and maybe even her husband."

Everybody loved that idea. Somebody else popped off, "We can't do that because they won't let us use the lobby for back sales. They have a rule, no bake sales."

We debated that for a little while and we just decided to go ahead and do it and dare them to shut it down. People left that night really fired up. Man, it seemed like everybody in Yakima baked. That next morning, we set up three tables before security showed up, and we had a great leaflet with a picture of the woman who couldn't get her chemo because the hospital wouldn't let other people donate.

"This is why we're having our bake sale so she can take care of herself. If we can't do for ourselves together, we've got to help each other. This is what the union is."

Man, we had another thing that sort of showed up. We would do cookie grams, where we would send cookies to people. For a dollar, you could send a cookie and a message. So, we sent people cookies with messages. Then people started sending management cookies with messages, telling them to do the right thing.

Management canceled their mandatory meetings. They would have weekly mandatory meetings with movies, and all kinds of reasons to say, "Vote against the union." Management canceled this, and it was three days before the election.

So, we got the momentum back and won the election by 11 votes. So close. Man, that was quite a fight.

We had a really hard time getting a contract out after that, too. We had to get a Catholic priest to come help us out, and push on Providence for not living up to their Catholic social values.

Then we right away went into a strike in the West Seattle Psychiatric Hospital, where we had organized that, along with this behavioral health group. Management wouldn't agree to a union shop and a contract, so we went out for 146 days on strike.

That was an incredibly busy, important time in the union's history. I helped out with the strike, but I came back from Yakima and we had another campaign at the Edmonds hospital, Stevens Hospital. It's a public district hospital.

We were just off to the races. This was the time when we organized easily a hospital a year, where there was never a slow time, where I was trying to find leads so that I didn't have to do all the leadership work, and we

could have more than one campaign going on. We began to find some good organizers, so our capacity grew. We had real success using NLRB tactics to organize. We then organized in Puyallup, the Good Samaritan Hospital.

It went pretty quickly for a while, and then some workers in Spokane called me. Are there any other questions?

[00:28:55] **SAI:** Yes, but please continue.

[00:28:57] **CURT:** Okay. We got a call from Spokane. They had two hospitals that were unorganized in terms of their service and maintenance group. We began to meet with those members. Lo and behold, in the midst of that, the boss announced that they were going to make a nine percent wage cut. They were really in trouble financially, and across the board, they were going to cut everybody's wages nine percent.

There has never been a gift more dramatic than that to get people to organize. [laughing] Then it really took off. The nurses jumped in and we got the whole hospital going on this. We had to get a whole slew of people out, and it was a long way from home. We had just merged with Local 6, so we had grown in membership.

It was a long supply line, let me just put it that way, all the way to Spokane. I remember the leadership being really helpful about that. We even had an executive board meeting out in Spokane so that the workers could see how supportive our members in Seattle wanted to be.

We ended up having the election, and we won all the units except for the big nurse group at the Deaconess Hospital, where we lost by 50, 60 votes, and we came back and won that in a year. So, we planted the flag in Spokane and got two big hospitals.

It was quite a bit of work to get contracts, and these weren't hospitals in good shape because they wouldn't have done a nine percent cut, so we had to figure out how to win in that setting. Then, a for-profit health system came and bought them, so that complicated everything again. It was quite a bargaining challenge, and I was really grateful for the bargaining side of things.

We had a really good run of organizing, from Yakima to Seattle to Puyallup, hospitals as well as behavioral health, and then Spokane. Our biggest nemesis has been Providence. The international asked me to go organize in Portland. They invested a lot of money in creating a campaign in that Local 49 to see if we could organize Providence, which had a huge footprint in Portland, and was unorganized.

I worked on that for three years, commuting every week to go down there. It was quite a challenge. We got a lot of workers involved and had a good campaign, but Providence would not make it easy for us to organize, and we knew that if we didn't have a really strong majority, we couldn't win here.

We never got to a strong majority. We tried to get Providence to understand that there would be a community campaign to get neutrality. We got a lot of priests and church folks involved and had them march on Providence. There was a big, huge march that happened in November to try to get Providence to do the right thing and we just could never get them to do it. They're just so wealthy and so stubborn, it was incredibly difficult.

After three years, that campaign went to Meg Niemi, who is the current president down in Local 49. I came back.

[00:33:07] **SAI:** With all of your diverse experiences in organizing across several unions and other organizations, how have your strategies and your perception of organizing shifted over the years?

[00:33:25] **CURT:** Organizing always happens in opposition to something. People need to be upset and have energy around making change. At the same time that the labor movement is being attacked now—we just had

this recent Supreme Court Janus [v AFSCME] decision—I think that it may be one of the ripest times to try to organize because of the money [meeting? leaving?] the system. And the negativity, the bad impact, always goes downhill, so it goes to the workers, it doesn't generally go to management.

I'm really proud that our union is staying in, organizing, and trying to figure out how we organize in a difficult moment where a lot of our attention could go to sustaining our union here. But we have really good leaders that are in our institutions.

There's new advances in how quickly we can get cards signed, because we now have electronic cards and that kind of thing. But a union is really about building a network of trust in a workplace, and I don't really think there's a shortcut around that. You really have to build relationships, and you have to build trust, and you have to go through something hard. It doesn't happen easily without some struggle.

We just had an election in Cadillac a year ago that Theresa ran and it was a lot of the same dynamics as what we did in Yakima and what we've done in Spokane and what happened in other places. It happened quicker in some ways because of electronic cards and some of the other things that happened, but the dynamics are the same.

Part of the gift is that hospitals are a space where there's a lot of people in a confined space, so it's much easier to create a network when you see the same people every day and you have a community already established, to some extent.

When we have workplaces like Uber or these technology places, or even clinics, you don't have that many people in one space. Everybody's spread out, and electronic communication doesn't lend itself to building trust. It's not unhelpful, but it's incredibly neutral. When you're having a face-to-face conversation, you can express a lot more, and you can really gauge whether somebody's with you or not.

I think organizing is going to have to change to be in the world that we're currently in. It's exciting what's happening with these red states and teachers. A lot of me wonders whether what's happening with teachers is also happening with healthcare workers. These are all implications of red states not providing money for social services, for healthcare, for teaching—education.

Hospitals may be as hard hit. They just don't have a union as ubiquitous as the teachers union, so we need to somehow be out there in a way where they feel like they have a choice. I'm excited, and I think that's a possibility.

[00:37:08] **SAI:** Now that you're transitioning out of SEIU 1199NW, what do you feel with your culminating experiences, what impacts do you feel you will leave behind that you're most proud of or feel the most deeply, and how have you yourself been impacted personally by the work you've done?

[00:37:37] **CURT:** I think my most important contribution was working for the organizing institute and working here in this local to train new staff. I was really lucky that I got good staff to work with. The head of the teachers union in Chicago that's doing really important work right now, Jesse Sharkey, worked with me on that steelworker campaign in Vancouver.

Mike Sukal, who's the director of organizing at AFSCME, worked with me at the steelworkers for a long time. Barbara Rosenthal, who's now the organizing director for SEIU, worked with me for a long time. Terese and Casey, who are real leaders in the local now, came up with me.

So, I would say that my most important contribution was just being an organizer that was principled and having good staff around me, being lucky enough to have the right people join the union and want to become

organizers, and were willing to learn. I just didn't get in the way of their learning and I didn't need to grab all the space or make it about me. They've become really good organizers and I'm really happy about that.

[00:38:57] **SAI:** How have you yourself been personally impacted by the work?

[00:39:01] **CURT:** You can't help but be a little transformed yourself when you see workers who, when you start the campaign, are so beat down, and they just rise with each other. You have somebody who was a housekeeper at Northwest Hospital—who was so afraid to meet, she needed to meet me in the graveyard across the street from the hospital—become a leader in the campaign, conduct a press conference, absolutely evolve to being a leader.

Organizing is transformational. People are changed and so is the world, so is the relationship with the employer, all of that. Just being able to witness that humbles me. It just gives you hope.

I know we're in a terrible moment right now with politics going off the rail with somebody from the one percent in charge, but in some ways, we need to wake up. That's what we needed. We needed a kick in the ass to wake up.

Now, there's a lot of people on the margins who are getting a lot more impacted than people of privilege around this stuff, and that's a horrible thing. And we need to wake up and realize we've got to organize. Politics isn't going to set you free here. It's collective action that's going to set you free. I think we missed that and I think it's all about the 2018 election. It is—it's not unimportant—but people need to stick together and fight.

It's really hard because we have these huge institutions. I don't know how you organize Amazon. I don't know how we organize Federal Express. There's massive employers now with power that's more aggregated than, I think, any time in history in some ways. We've just got to think about how do we make something happen in these places?

I'm a little worried that with robotics and other things that there's going to be fewer jobs. I don't know how we organize in that environment. There's a lot of challenges, but I know that when people act as a collective, they can make change. Maybe it has to happen more in communities. Maybe it has to happen in different ways, but the truth I've been taught is that when we come together, we're way stronger than when we're just by ourselves whining about how terrible stuff is at the coffee shop, and not actually taking any collective actions.

You can write all the emails you want and all of that. That's not bad. I don't want to be negative about that, but it really is about putting your own self-interest down and figuring out how you minimize yourself so that you can partner with other people and become a collective. We get a little carried away with ourselves and our social media footprint and all the rest of that. How about we just come together a little bit more?

I'm preaching a little bit here, so I should shut up.

[00:42:44] **SAI:** One of my final questions is, what do you hope others learn from your experience in the labor movement as a whole, and specifically? What has it all meant to you to be a part of this huge movement?

[00:43:03] **CURT:** I was raised by organizers in 1199 on the East Coast who absolutely sacrificed and created a legacy of organizing that I feel incredibly privileged to have carried on for 30 years.

I hope that there's a lineage of organizing culture that moves forward that puts workers at the center of the organizing campaign; that respects differences; that understands how to organize people of color with white folks, nurses with dietary workers; that understands that issues, if you manage them well, or if you agitate them

well, will overcome difference, and as we overcome difference, we build power. I think we're doing that better than we used to. I think there's a movement sensibility that is beginning to show up.

But my biggest hope is just that this lineage of worker-centered collective action carries on and that what I learned from 1199 and how it got off, the organizing director of 1199 in New York is now transmitted to Teresa and Casey and Robin and Jane and the new officers of this union. Diane has always been somebody who's carried on that legacy as well, so I feel like it's in good hands and I'm not going to be terribly missed.

Part of my job that I've actually done fairly well is to get out of the way when it's time for somebody else to step up.

[00:44:57] **SAI:** Is there anything else that we haven't covered that you would like to cover or speak about?

[00:45:08] **CURT:** The only other thing I would say that I think is interesting that I had a chance to work on was in Tacoma. I think unions should consider more about how we engage communities in our campaigns. Our members have problems beyond the workplace. Our members have real problems. Are their kids getting a decent education? And housing is going to be such a crisis.

So, I think that our union needs to understand how we find shared interest with other organizations. We've done this in mental health. I think we can do this in certain geographies if we spend the time building the relationships.

We've always valued our field organizing to the point we almost are a little fetishized about how we do field organizing. I think that's great, and there's a missed opportunity if we don't figure out how to partner with Black churches, or how to partner with other organizations that have similar interests.

If we can do that, we can build more power and make more change happen. We did that well, I thought, in Tacoma, and we have the best charity care rates in the state partly because of the work that we did in Tacoma to raise financial assistance to people who needed health care that extended beyond our members and into the entire community.

My hope is that we can do that maybe with housing or some other issues as well.

[00:46:58] **SAI:** Absolutely. Anything else?

[00:46:58] **CURT:** No.

[00:46:58] **SAI:** Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.